DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 274 186 FL 016 025

AUTHOR Gonzalez, Barbara
TITLE Listening Activities for Small Groups.
PUB DATE Mar 84
NOTE 7p.; In: On TESOL '84. A Brave New World for TESOL. Selected Papers from the Annual Convention of the Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (18th, Houston, Texas, March 6-11, 1984); see FL 016 005.
PUB TYPE Guides - Classroom Use - Guides (For Teachers) (052) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Audiolingual Skills; *Class Activities; Classroom Techniques; English (Second Language); *Listening Skills; *Second Language Instruction; *Small Group Instruction

ABSTRACT

Successful listening is a critical element of learning and performing in a new language. Second language teachers should include more listening activities in their class routines, and should consider a greater variety of formats and class organizational styles for those activities. The small-group format, not often used for listening activities, has a significant number of psychological and pedagogical benefits, including student assumption of more responsibility for their own and others' learning, increased attention to individual student needs, increased motivation, and a more natural range of listening experience. A number of commonly-used listening formats work well in small groups and many activity formats described in second-language publications can be adapted for both small groups and listening practice, including picture matching, manipulatives, commands, situations, logic, and sentence and paragraph true-false formats. (MSE)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

LISTENING ACTIVITIES FOR SMALL GROUPS

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
J. Frank-McNeil

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

ED274186

Barbara Gonzalez
The University of Texas at San Antonio

Why Listening Activities Are Important

The listening and speaking skills in second language teaching and learning have been of particular concern for the past forty years. Listening as a special focus apart from its automatic inclusion in every speech act has been an important topic for language educators for the past ten years. Recent research has stressed the great necessity for teachers to provide special opportunities for second language learners to develop their listening skills. Students need the chance to sharpen listening skills in contexts that do not require them to respond orally every sixty seconds, contexts that do not continually divert their attention from listening to speaking. A primary argument that favors this emphasis on listening derives from a comparison of the second language learner and the native speaker as a learner of the same language. Asher (1977) points out that the child of six has had 17,520 hours of listening to that language (a conservative estimate at eight hours daily). The college major in that language who has completed twelve advanced courses probably has had 780 classroom and laboratory contact hours with the language but may not have had additional contact hours. Even though most of these hours have probably been spent in listening, it comes as no surprise if that student is not functioning at a very advanced level of proficiency. Even if we may say that the older learner brings much to the language learning process with the ability to analyze and synthesize the working rules of the new language and with more advanced knowledge of vocabulary concepts and real-life situations, there can surely be little comparison between 17,520 hours of listening and 780. The implication, then, is that students need to spend more class time on listening activities.

Further, most students find listening much easier than speaking, particularly in beginning classes where many students are very apprehensive about speaking. A greater emphasis on listening skills can make students feel more comfortable, and can facilitate a reduction of fear which can facilitate better performance.

FL016 025

Barbara Gonzalez, Associate Professor of Second Language Education at the University of Texas at San Antonio, specializes in Spanish, ESL and Multicultural Education.

Then it follows that students who perform better will feel more positive about their second language study and about their own abilities. The value of positive reinforcement through successful performance in the language cannot be overestimated.

We have noted the psychological benefits to the students to be gained from a greater emphasis on listening in the classroom and the greater growth in listening skills with the dedication of more time to aural activities. In addition, it is reasonable to assume that greater growth in the other language skills can occur when there is more initial emphasis on the development of the listening skill. If one accepts the assumption that the student can retain more from successful listening than from less successful listening and speaking combinations, then there should be a greater knowledge base to serve as material for positive transfer for subsequent performance in reading, speaking and writing. Thus, there are several benefits which may accrue to students who have the chance to do more listening in their second language classrooms.

Why Some Listening Acitvities Should be in Small Groups

Students can be given more listening opportunities in a number of ways. The teacher can be sure to use the target language as much as possible, and conduct more listening activities for the class as a whole. Students can also conduct their own listening activities in small groups. Certainly the principles of andragogy support this notion (Knowles 1973). Peer teaching usually results in a higher degree of involvement for students, and that involvement can result from the students' directing their own listening activities. Further, greater self-confidence in the use of the language can result from their being given this kind of opportunity. The student who can successfully present material in the target language for peer listening activities is likely to develop more positive feelings about the language and the ability to use it.

In this context, the students are assuming responsibility not only for their own learning, but also for that of others in their group. As noted, this circumstance can result in greater involvement and greater self-confidence on the part of students; but there also is another possible by-product that this author has found most interesting in her own implementation of small-group listening activities. If students find that their peers have difficulty understanding them they pay much more careful attention to any unusual features in their pronunciation, and tend to regularize these featrues much more rapidly than they do in response to their teacher's correction in the course of a large-group activity. They are getting specific individualized assistance in pronunciation from their peers, and are usually positively disposed toward this help and integrate the suggested changes.

The individualization carries over for the listeners, too. They also can receive a high degree of attention to their personal difficulties in the framework of any listening activity. They can ask for repetitions; they can ask questions; and they can ask for adjustments of speed and volume. While some listening activities, normally those that are teacher-led, should be less controlled by students as are real-life listening presentations, it is highly advantageous that some activities be within the realm of student control so that individual difficulties can receive attention. The small-group format answers that need.

Generally speaking, students are more motivated to pay attention in the small-

group setting. Nothing fascinates like one's peers and the social undertones of the small group; even students who are properly oriented to the necessary task focus (as all should be) still derive great pleasure, and thus motivation, from the format that puts them in a close work situation with a few classmates. Further, the variation in format from the usual teacher-directed activity can of itself be motivating and thus facilitate higher attention levels and possible greater learning.

Finally, this variation in format from thirty students listening to the teacher to three students (or even only one) listening to another student allows for a more natural range of listening experience in the second-language classroom. In real-life the second-language learner experiences the need to listen to both natural and artificially reproduced voices, to function as one listener in a crowd, and to listen in a small-group or pair situation. Thus, the classroom should also afford the student all these different kinds of listening experiences.

Considerations for Effectiveness

As with any sort of small-group activity, students need to be prepared to participate responsibly. They need to understand exactly what they are to do and the steps in the procedure might well be listed on the board or handed to each group leader in written form. They need the usual orientation to the material with explanation of any terms or concepts that may be unfamiliar. They need clear instructions on how their groups are to be formed and obviously this is most easily accomplished by having them work with those by whom they are already seated.

Perhaps most important, however, is their orientation to the importance of the task. They need to know why they are doing the activity, what they can expect to derive from it, and that it is a learning experience and not entertainment. A good way to ensure this last point is to illustrate what learnings from this activity will be dealt with in the subsequent whole-group wrap-up and in subsequent evaluation activities. With the proper preparation, students can indeed work effectively in small groups.

Formats

The material to be included in any small-group listening activity a teacher prepares has to be largely familiar to the students and its highlights should be quickly reviewed beforehand to maximize student performance in the activity. Any such material can be treated in a number of different formats for listening, however. The teacher need only select a format that he/she feels will be effective and appealing to his/her students.

There are a number of common formats for listening which work well for small groups.

A. *Picture Matching*

In this format each student pair or group is given a picture sheet or sheets comprising a dozen numbered squares of small line drawings, and a sheet of two (or more) scripts of ten numbered statements each about the pictures. Then a student in the pair or group reads a script while the partner or group looks at the picture. The listeners are to decide which pic-

ture each statement refers to (if any) and on their own answer sheet write that picture number by the statement number. At the end of the script they discuss the answers. Then the next student reads a script to his/her partner or group and the process is repeated.

B. *Manipulatives*

In this format each student pair or group is given one or more packets of small pictures of pertinent objects, and a sheet of two or more scripts of statements about the objects. A student reads one of the scripts to the group. The statements refer to a scene which the listeners are to recreate by manipulating or arranging the object pictures as described in the statements they are hearing. At the end of the script they can compare their results with one another and with statements. Then the next student reads a script to his/her partner or group and the process is repeated.

C. *Commands*

In this format each student pair or group receives two or more scripts of commands of the sort that can be carried out at their seats. Each partner or group member takes a turn reading a script of orders to the others, who carry them out. At the end of each script they discuss the items if they were unsure of any. Then the next student reads a script to his/her partner or group and the activity is repeated.

D. *Situations*

Each student pair or group receives a packet of situation cards. A student gives a monologue appropriate to the situation which appears on the card drawn from the packet without letting the others see the card. The others listen and guess at the problem situation. Then the second student gives a monologue for his/her situation and the process continues.

E. *Logic*

Each student pair or group receives several simple logical thinking problems on cards or a sheet in the target language. A student reads the problem on the card (or the first problem on the sheet) to the group. The listeners may hear the problem as many times as they like but are not to read it. The group gradually solves each problem together and the next is read by another student.

F. *True-False*

Each student pair or group is given on a sheet or cards several scripts of ten or so true-false statements that involve general knowledge. Each student has a turn reading a script to the others, who listen and write true or false on an answer sheet. At the conclusion of each script the students discuss the responses. Then the next student reads a script to his/her partner or group and the process is repeated.

G. *Paragraph True-False*

In this format each student pair or group receives a script of several paragraphs in the target language, each with a subsequent set of true-false statements. Each student, in turn, reads a paragraph and its statements to the group. The listeners record their true or false responses on a separate sheet, and at the end of each segment the group discusses the answers. Then the next student reads a script to his/her partner or group and the process is repeated.

Summary

Successful listening is a critical underpinning to one's learning and performance in a new language. Teachers of second languages need to include more listening activities in their class routines, and they also need to consider a greater variety of formats and class-organizational styles for those activities. The small-group format is not often utilized for listening activities and yet has much to recommend it. There are a significant number of psychological and pedagogical benefits to having students carry out listening activities in small groups. A number of the commonly employed listening formats work well in small groups, and many activity formats described in recent second-language publications are suitable for adaptation to both the listening skill and to the small group.

REFERENCES

Asher, James. 1977. *Learning another language through actions*. Los Gatos, California: Sky Oaks Productions.

Brown, H. Douglas. 1980. *Principles of language learning and teaching*. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall.

Eckard, Ronald D. and Mary Ann Kearney. 1981. *Teaching conversation skills in ESL*. Washington, D.C.: Center for Applied Linguistics.

Gattegno, Caleb. 1972. *Teaching foreign languages in schools: the silent way*. New York: Educational Solutions.

Gaudiani, Claire L. 1981. The participatory classroom. *Foreign Language Annals* 14: 172-180.

Gonzalez, Barbara. *Small group activities for second language teaching*. Eric Documents ED 152 102.

Hubp, Loretta Burke. 1974. *Let's play games in Spanish*. Skokie, Illinois: National Textbook Co.

Joiner, Elizabeth. 1978. Keep them guessing. In *Developing communication skills*, Elizabeth Joiner and Patricia Westphal (Eds.). Rowley, Massachusetts: Newbury House.

Kettering, Judith Carl. 1975. *Developing communicative competence: interaction activities in English as a second language*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press.

Knowles, Malcolm. 1973. *The adult learner: a neglected species*. Houston: Gulf Publishing.

Kramsch, Malcolm. 1981. *Discourse analysis and second language teaching*. Washington, D.C.: Center for Applied Linguistics.

Krashen, Stephen D. 1981. *Second language acquisition and second language learning*. New York: Pergamon Press.

Lee, W. R. 1979. *Language teaching games and contests*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Littlewood, William. 1981. *Communicative language teaching*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Moskowitz, Gertrude. 1978. *Caring and sharing in the foreign language class*. Rowley, Massachusetts: Newbury House.

Omaggio, Alice C. 1981. *Helping learners succeed: activities for the foreign language classroom*. Washington, D.C.: Center for Applied Linguistics.

Paulston, Christina Bratt and Howard R. Selekman. 1978. Interaction activities in the foreign classroom or how to grow a tulip rose. In *Developing communication skills*, Elizabeth Joiner and Patricia Westphal (Eds.). Rowley, Massachusetts: Newbury House.

Savignon, Sandra. 1978. Teaching for communication. In *Developing communication skills*, Elizabeth Joiner and Patricia Westphal (Eds.). Rowley, Massachusetts: Newbury House.

Stevick, Earl W. 1982. *Teaching and learning languages*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Ur, Penny. 1981. *Discussions that work*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.